

# Virginia Department of Historic Resources

## PIF Resource Information Sheet

This information sheet is designed to provide the Virginia Department of Historic Resources with the necessary data to be able to evaluate the significance of the proposed district for possible listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This is not a formal nomination, but a necessary step in determining whether or not the district could be considered eligible for listing. Please take the time to fill in as many fields as possible. A greater number of completed fields will result in a more timely and accurate assessment. Staff assistance is available to answer any questions you have in regards to this form.

<b>General Property Information</b>		For Staff Use Only DHR ID #: 127-6730	
District Name(s):	Hermitage Road Warehouse Historic District		
District or Selected Building Date(s):	1913-1958	<input type="checkbox"/> Circa <input type="checkbox"/> Pre <input type="checkbox"/> Post	Open to the Public? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Main District Streets and/or Routes:	Bounded by Hermitage Road, Sherwood Avenue, Overbrook Road, and I-95		
City:	Richmond	Zip:	
County or Ind. City:	Richmond (City)		
USGS Quad(s):	Richmond		

<b>Physical Character of General Surroundings</b>	
Acreage: ~47	Setting (choose one): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> City <input type="checkbox"/> Urban <input type="checkbox"/> Town <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Rural <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Corridor
<p>Site Description Notes/Notable Landscape Features/Streetscapes: This industrial district is characterized by roughly a dozen medium- to large-scale one-story warehouse buildings set on a gridded block pattern. Most of the buildings have large footprints that occupy the majority of the block on which they sit. The buildings are typically one-story, clad in brick, covered with flat roofs, and exhibit various mid-century architectural influences such as Art Deco, Art Moderne, and International-Style. Remnants of rail spurs that historically served the buildings are evident throughout the streets and open spaces in between the buildings.</p>	
Ownership Categories:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Public-Local <input type="checkbox"/> Public-State <input type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal

<b>General District Information</b>	
What were the historical uses of the resources within the proposed district? Examples include: Dwelling, Store, Barn, etc...	
Warehouse, Office Space, Production and Processing	
What are the current uses? (if other than the historical use)	Warehouse use continues. SPCA and the Central Virginia Foodbank occupy several warehouses. Several buildings are vacant.
Architectural styles or elements of buildings within the proposed district:	Art Deco, Art Moderne, International-Style
Architects, builders, or original owners of buildings within the proposed district:	Export Leaf Tobacco Company, Miller and Rhoads Department Store, A.H. Robins Company
Are there any known threats to this district? N/A	

**General Description of District:** (Please describe building patterns, types, features, and the general architectural quality of the proposed district. Include prominent materials and noteworthy building details within the district and a general setting and/or streetscape description.)

### *Summary Description*

The proposed Hermitage Road Warehouse Historic District is located in a predominantly industrial area roughly two miles north and west of the city center. The district is bounded by Hermitage Road to the west, Overbrook Road to the south, Sherwood Avenue to the north, and I-95 to the east. It is bordered by mixed industrial and commercial development to the north and south, a mix of municipal and industrial development to the west, and residential and institutional development to the east. The roughly 47-acre area is characterized by twelve middle- to large-scale warehouses with a handful of smaller buildings with related functions. The earliest of the buildings, the Export Leaf Tobacco Company Warehouses, form a strong southern edge to the district and were constructed in 1913. The majority of the buildings in the district were constructed during the 1940s and 1950s. The buildings in the district are predominantly one-story, although there are several two- and three-story wings on individual buildings, and a six-story office tower attached to the A. H. Robins building. Several of the one-story warehouses are more than 20 feet tall because of the large-scale open interior spaces. Brick is the predominant exterior material and flat roofs are typical. Several architectural styles (Art Deco, Moderne and International Style) and influences are evident. The buildings still exhibit a cohesive and uniform feel from like-materials, similar scale, and a shared developmental pattern.

### *Setting*

The buildings are set on an irregular grid of streets that developed concurrently with building construction, thus forming seven blocks of varying sizes. Many buildings occupy entire blocks or the majority thereof, with paved staging areas and storage yards filling any space not occupied by the buildings. Several properties also have small grassy areas bordering parking lots or small lawns along the building sides. Building setback varies throughout the district; however there is typically little to none along the east-west streets, and more along the north-south streets, thus lending a feeling of consistency. The east-west streets are also more likely to have sidewalks along the edges of the road than the north-south streets. Visible throughout the roadways and open areas in the district are the remains of rail spurs that connected many of the buildings to the railroad mainline several blocks to the south. These rail spurs originally ran alongside loading docks on the sides or rear of the buildings. These docks are now served by trucks, or have been abandoned, but remain visible.

### *1910s*

The earliest buildings in the district are two rows of long linear warehouses constructed by the Export Leaf Tobacco Company in 1913. The property these buildings are located on was the first tract of land sold by A.D. Williams, who originally owned all or most of the property within the historic district. Williams planned for the land to be developed as industrial and commercial space. Predictably, these buildings are located on the southern edge of the district closest to the railroad and older developed areas. The buildings have solid brick exterior walls with wood columns and beams. Originally these were windowless warehouses with relatively few loading doors. Windows have been added to several of the warehouses to adapt them for continued use. These massive, utilitarian warehouses are unpainted red brick with continuous corbelled cornices and terra cotta coping. The Export Leaf Tobacco Company warehouses form the south border of the historic district and span the district's east and west sides, from Hermitage to I-95.

### *The Mid-1940s*

The next phase of development in the district occurred in the mid-1940s when A.D. Williams subdivided and sold the remainder of his property in what now comprises the district. The sale of this land likely coincided with the city's zoning the area as industrial in 1946 (City Master Plan 1946). It was at this time the majority of the grid pattern within the district was defined. The first building constructed as part of this phase of development was Miller and Rhoads Department Store warehouse and distribution center at the corner of Hermitage Road and Cummings Drive. This Art Deco style building, now the Greyhound Service Center, consists of a taller central block with clerestory windows flanked by two lower wings. The front façade has four full-height brick pilasters dividing the central bays and shows Moderne and International Style influences with wide horizontal boxed windows. It is also the first building in the district that combined a small office or administrative block with the main warehouse building; a trend that many of the other buildings in the district would follow. It is also the first of the buildings in the district to employ a steel frame with brick facing. Unique to this building is the long concrete loading dock that extends from the rear of the building along a rail spur, and connects to associated incinerator and boiler buildings, which each have a multi-story tapered brick smoke stack.

### *The 1950s*

The majority of the rest of the buildings throughout the district was constructed over the next decade. This includes all four buildings between Sherwood Avenue and Cummings Drive, the two buildings that occupy the block bounded by Cummings, Durham, Rhoadmiller, and Hardy, and the building at the northwest corner of Rhoadmiller and Hardy. Most of these buildings are one-story with irregular footprints and used for warehouse and small office space. They are brick faced with either steel frame or concrete block structural systems and covered with flat roofs. They exhibit understated Moderne and International Style influences with eyebrow ledges, boxed windows, and concrete banding. One building retains a rounded aluminum door canopy. The building at the corner of Rhoadmiller and Hardy is slightly different in that it has brick foundation but exposed concrete block walls above. It is also unique in that it exhibits a heavy projecting loading dock canopy and the building was constructed with a clipped corner following the curvature of a rail spur.

The headquarters and manufacturing center for A.H. Robins at the intersection of Cummings and Durham was constructed in 1952, contemporaneously with the majority of other buildings. The A. H. Robins building exhibits a much more pronounced International Style influence. The building originally was composed of a low one-story office block facing Cummings Drive with a taller production block to the rear. It was faced with yellow brick and featured a concrete boxed continuous band of windows, a heavy cast concrete full-height entrance bay with an inverse angled painted concrete panel over an aluminum-framed doorway, and concrete coping. Throughout the later 1950s and early 1960s the building was expanded several times with International Style components, culminating with the six-story office block "tower" in 1961. Each of the tower's facades has four-bay full-height concrete boxed window bays further divided by aluminum ribbing and metallic curtain-wall panels flanked by a full-height blank yellow brick panel.

### *Integrity*

Overall, the buildings and development pattern of the district appear intact from the historic period and retain a relatively high degree of integrity. All but one of the buildings within the district boundaries were constructed during the period of significance. The Salvation Army at 2601 Hermitage Rd, constructed in 1965, is the only building constructed later, and is the only non-contributing building. Several of the contributing buildings have been expanded and renovated over the years, but their original design and configuration remain legible. Many buildings retain their original doors, windows, canopies, and other

features; and in cases where these elements have been replaced, they have typically been replaced with compatible elements that continue to convey the historic character of the buildings and the district.

**Significance Statement:** Briefly note any significant events, personages, and/or families associated with the proposed district. It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or genealogies to this form. Please list all sources of information. Normally, only information contained on this form is forwarded to the State Review Board.

### *Statement of Significance*

The proposed Hermitage Road Warehouse Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C with a period of significance extending from 1913 when the first building was constructed until 1958, when I-95 was built and restricted the district from further development. The district is potentially eligible under Criterion A as representative of the industrial history of Richmond, Virginia, and more specifically local industry's twentieth century growth northwest of the city center and adjacent to the railroad. The district is also potentially eligible under Criterion C as a cohesive group of mid-twentieth century warehouse buildings exhibiting architectural and engineering trends of the period. The historic district includes warehouse and manufacturing facilities for some of the city's most prominent businesses, including Export Leaf Tobacco (the purchasing arm of British American Tobacco), J. P. Taylor Co. (a subsidiary of Universal Leaf), Miller & Rhoads, and the A. H. Robins Company.

### *Criterion A*

The Hermitage Road Warehouse District, developed specifically as an industrial area. Its original owner, A. D. Williams, sold the land, beginning in the 1910s and continuing in the mid-1940s, for warehouse and industrial development. The street pattern therefore evolved around large rectangular building blocks so large facilities could be constructed with loading facilitated by easy access to railway. Rail spurs were incorporated into the layout of the district allowing larger quantities of goods to be moved to and from the buildings from the main line, and then shipped by the rail line or by trucks. Because of this, many of the businesses that located in the district were used for storage, shipping, and distribution; representing a different type of facility than the production- and commercially-oriented businesses in Carver, Manchester and Scott's Addition.

During its early development the district was selected as the site of facilities for highly prominent Richmond-based businesses including the Miller and Rhoads Department Store and A.H. Robins pharmaceutical company. Miller and Rhoads had additional properties throughout the region. The Miller and Rhoads warehouse building at Hermitage and Rhoadmiller appears to have been the company's primary distribution center. A.H. Robins was an international pharmaceutical enterprise with its corporate headquarters and manufacturing center anchoring the east side of the historic district from 1953 until 1988, when Robins was acquired by American Home Products (which became Wyeth in 2002). The original owner of all property in the historic district was A.D. Williams, a well-known tobacco heir and philanthropist. Williams' family ties to the Export Leaf Tobacco Company, a subsidiary of British American Tobacco, almost certainly gave rise to the initial development of warehouses in the district.

### *Criterion C*

Stylistically, the buildings represent an intact collection Art Deco, Art Moderne, and International-style influences as applied to industrial construction. The use of these three particular styles helps to bind the buildings together as all three share similar clean lines, horizontal emphasis, and flat roofs. The stylistic elements displayed on the buildings are minimal in most cases, but distinct enough to characterize them as such. The highest-style building in the district is the International-style building constructed for the A.H.

Robins headquarters. This building, which includes a six-story tower, anchors the west side of the district and is very visible from I-95.

The buildings in the district are also linked by similar scale and construction method. Most are one-story in height with large footprints and attenuated rectangular blocks. Almost all have, or originally had, loading docks along the side or rear that were once accessible to rail cars along the spurs that ran throughout the district. The 1940s and 1950s buildings' structural systems reflect the popularity of steel frame trusses and bar joists supported by brick veneer exterior walls. These steel structures enabled increasingly vast interior spaces, uninterrupted by columns, and provided efficient, large-scale fireproof warehouse space.

### *Boundaries*

The proposed boundaries of the district define a cohesive collection of intact historic buildings and reflect distinct period of industrial warehouse development. In 1913, the beginning of the period of significance, the land that comprises the historic district was owned by A.D. Williams. When Williams sold the lower portion of this property, bound by Overbrook Road (then Howard Road) on the south and Hermitage Road on the west, to Export Leaf Tobacco, he effectively set the course for the future industrial warehouse use of the larger property. There was a hiatus in the development until the end of World War II. But throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Williams sold the rest of his property in the historic district, which was also developed with industrial facilities. In 1958, the end of the period of significance, the construction of I-95 to the east halted further eastern development of the property and became a clear delineator between industrial and residential areas. Property north of Sherwood Avenue developed with mixed industrial and commercial uses after 1958, but these uses had no relationship to the railroad, and were dominated by the huge state-owned Alcoholic Beverage Control distribution center. South of Overbrook Road was an area generally occupied by the Union Stockyards and a meatpacking district that has lost integrity as a result of demolition, new construction and a complete change in use. West of Hermitage Road was historically the state fair grounds. It is now the site of a baseball stadium and assorted other municipal facilities.

### *Richmond's Industrial Development from 1906-1945*

While early industry in the city was focused along the river; by the late nineteenth century industrial development was not strictly tied to the water for transportation and power. There was a shift towards rail transportation when the RF&P Railroad entered the city from the northwest. In 1900, Richmond was in a period of recovery and economic growth. That year, the Seaboard Airline Railroad which generally followed path of Bacon's Quarter Branch north of town, tied into the RF&P near where it crossed Boulevard. This junction connected Richmond to a rail network extending 36,000 miles across the nation, and drove a host of new industrial and commercial development in the immediate area. Several large tracts east of Hermitage and south of the historic district were put to use for stockyards, meat packing, iron works, and additional tobacco warehouses.

In 1913, the Export Leaf Tobacco Company warehouses were constructed just to the north of the Union Stock Yards along Howard Road (present-day Overbrook Road). This was the first development in the historic district. Interestingly, the new tobacco warehouses were outside of city limits, which were still drawn at Bacon's Quarter Branch, however the city issued an ordinance in 1913 approving the Export Leaf Company to tap into the city water main supplying the state fair grounds. This could indicate that the city was encouraging industrial growth in the area and it could have been a result of the city's plans to annex the area. In 1914, the city of Richmond annexed over 12 square miles of southern Henrico County that included the former fair grounds, Scott's Addition, and the area north of the railroad including the proposed Hermitage Road Warehouse Historic District.

At first, the industrial focus and character of the area developed naturally as businesses built alongside the tracks. By the 1920s however, industrial expansion began to slowly creep into some of the adjacent residential areas in the southeastern portion of the area including Carver and Scott's Addition. Because these two neighborhoods began with residential development in mind, the street and block pattern was smaller leading many of those neighborhoods' commercial and industrial facilities to be small- and medium-scale. In 1927, the first city-issued zoning ordinance designated these neighborhoods and much of the northwestern part of the city as industrial. Carver and Scott's Addition continued to evolve through the Depression years of the 1930s and were fully-developed by World War II. In contrast, the land north of the rail yards, including the proposed historic district, wasn't fully developed until after World War II.

As noted above, the land that comprises the proposed district was largely the property of A.D. Williams, a wealthy tobacco heir (his father was T. C. Williams, one of the city's most prominent tobaccoists). Unlike many of the wealthy Northside residents who had sold their holdings to the land development companies to create suburban neighborhoods, Williams held onto most of his Northside property through the speculation period. It is possible that the reason Williams sold the south section of his property to Export Leaf Tobacco in the 1910s was his family's relationship to the company. Export Leaf was a subsidiary of the British American Tobacco Company, which had acquired the T.C. Williams Tobacco Company in 1903, generating the Williams family fortune (British-American Tobacco Company n.d.).

### *Richmond's Industrial Development from 1946-1952*

Following the war, the city issued a second zoning ordinance in 1946 that expanded the industrial corridor further to the north and west. The property in the historic district was rezoned industrial (Richmond City Planning Commission 1946). At that time, Williams sold his property, and almost immediately the area was developed with warehouses, production facilities, and distribution centers (Sanborn Map 1950; City Directories). These buildings were sited within a new grid of roads including Rhoadmiller Street, Cummings Drive, Hardy Street, and Durham Street, and the network of rail spurs that serviced them. The buildings within the proposed Hermitage Road Warehouse Historic District developed in a different pattern than the earlier industrial areas. Because Carver and Scott's Addition were both originally residential areas, industrial development occurred along the smaller street grid pattern that was already established. These neighborhoods were bordered by the rail line but did not have spurs running throughout, and were therefore reliant on truck transportation to and from the rail lines, limiting the types of resources dealt with, and in-turn, the types of facilities constructed.

The first building constructed in the historic district after World War II was the large warehouse for the Miller & Rhoads Company, a prominent department store in Richmond. Built in 1946, the building was set on a large lot at the corner of Hermitage and Cummings Drive and had associated incinerator and boiler buildings located at the rear of the lot along Hardy Street. Within five years, Miller & Rhoads's development was joined by a wholesale grocery department, print shop, seed and farm supply warehouse, paper manufacturing shop, and assorted general warehouses constructed on nearby lots.

### *1953-1958*

In 1953, A.H. Robins Pharmaceutical Company moved its headquarters and opened its first manufacturing plant at the corner of Cummings Drive and Hardy Street (A.H. Robins n.d.). The company, established in 1866, was led by the founder's grandson E. Claiborne Robins. Claiborne Robins brought the business to international prominence, with the development of popular over-the-counter products like Robitussin. The company's new headquarters in the historic district was also its manufacturing center. The company reached its peak of success in the early 1970s. The 1970s and 1980s saw the company's slow decline as it responded to the strain of settling litigation related to the failure of the company's Dalkon Shield product.

The historic district acquired its current footprint in 1958 when the construction of I-95 defined its eastern boundary. It remains a warehouse and distribution center.

### *Bibliography*

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**Sponsor** (Individual and/or organization, with contact information. For more than one sponsor, please use a separate sheet.)

Mr. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ms. <input type="checkbox"/>	H. Louis Salomonsky, Historic Housing LLC		
(Name)			
1553 E Main St	Richmond	VA	23219
(Address)	(City)	(State)	(Zip Code)
hlsalomonsky@swa-co.com		804-782-6802	
(Email Address)		(Daytime telephone including area code)	

In the event of organization sponsorship, you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Telephone: (      ) \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant Information** (Individual completing form)

Mr. <input type="checkbox"/> Mrs. <input type="checkbox"/>	Robert J. Taylor, Jr. and Mary Harding Sadler			Dutton + Associates and Sadler & Whitehead Architects, PLC
Ms. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Miss <input type="checkbox"/>	(Firm)			
726 W 33rd St	Richmond	VA	23225-3533	
(Address)	(City)	(State)	(Zip Code)	
sadler@sadlerandwhitehead.com		804-231-5299		
(Email Address)		(Daytime telephone including area code)		
Applicant's Signature: <i>Mary Harding Sadler</i>		Date: 2/6/2013		

**Notification**

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.

Mr. <input type="checkbox"/> Mrs. <input type="checkbox"/> Dr. <input type="checkbox"/>	Lou Brown Ali			City Clerk
Miss <input type="checkbox"/> Ms. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hon. <input type="checkbox"/>	(Name)			
Richmond, VA	900 E Broad Street, Suite 200			
(Locality)	(Address)			
Richmond	VA	23219	804-646-7955	
(City)	(State)	(Zip Code)	(Daytime telephone including area code)	

Please use the following space to explain why you are seeking an evaluation of this district.

This preliminary information form is submitted because the owner of one of the properties plans a tax credit rehabilitation.

Would you be interested in the State and/or the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes ☒ No ☐

Would you be interested in the easement program? Yes ☐ No ☒